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FROM THE AMBASSADOR FOR SECRETARY RUMSFELD
DEPT FOR A/S DAN FRIED
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [SP](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR SPANISH DEFENSE MINISTER ALONSO
MEETING WITH SECDEF

Classified By: Ambassador Eduardo Aguirre for reasons 1.4 (b) & (d).

¶1. (C/NF) When you meet with Spanish Defense Minister Jose Antonio Alonso on October 23, you are meeting a man who is vastly different from his predecessor. Whereas ex-Minister Bono is a lifelong politician and rival of President Zapatero, Alonso is a judge and lifelong friend of Zapatero. Bono had a knack for hearing what he wanted to hear and put himself first. Alonso listens closely and makes careful, reasoned decisions. Alonso has shown as both Interior and Defense Minister that he values and promotes a cooperative relationship and will not stick a finger in an ally's eye to score domestic political points. In his six months as Defense Minister, Alonso has let Bono's Venezuela plane deal wither, has made Spain a more helpful voice at NATO, and most recently has brought the US flag back to the Spanish National Day parade. Alonso cannot solve all of our problems, but he also isn't part of the problem.

¶2. (C/NF) On the foreign policy side, Washington leaders have engaged frequently and repeatedly with Spain over the past year, implementing Secretary Rice's US-Spain strategy and making Spain a platform for the US's global agenda. Because of Spain's location and historical connections, their meetings and phone calls increasingly relate not just to Europe and Latin America, but to the Middle East and Africa as well. In June, Foreign Minister Moratinos had a working lunch with Secretary Rice in Washington in which they discussed all these areas. Recent visitors to Madrid have included the Attorney General, Education Secretary Spellings, DEA Administrator Tandy, and Deputy Treasury Secretary Kimmit, as well as a slew of State Department and Pentagon policymakers. They have gone away satisfied that, while the relationship is likely never going to reach the point where Presidents Bush and Zapatero would sit down together, the US and Spain have a strong, broad, mutually beneficial relationship in defense, counterterrorism, non-proliferation, counternarcotics, and other priority areas. The Zapatero government has matured to the point where it does not instinctively oppose US initiatives, and is much more careful to consult with us before diverging from our path.

¶3. (C/NF) While both Alonso and the US have contributed to the improving ties, the basic pillars of the Spanish contribution to the common defense remain stable and strong. Through Naval Station Rota and Moron Air Base - and the US-Spain bilateral defense treaty (Articles of Defense Cooperation) which is the cornerstone of the bilateral defense relationship - Spain provides the US with critical way stations for hundreds of US ships and thousands of US

planes moving in and out of the Middle East, Mediterranean, and African theaters each year. The GOS routinely renews OEF and OIF blanket overflight clearances. Spanish troops have been stalwarts in the Balkans for 10 years. Spain has also deployed to Afghanistan and is making a long-term commitment to that country. In Africa, Spain is the only country to put boots on the ground for the EU's Congo mission. Most recently, in Lebanon, where Alonso just visited his troops, Spain is deploying 1100 troops and leading a multi-national brigade. In the first 10 months of 2006, Spain spent 504 million euros on its deployments in Lebanon, Bosnia, Kosovo, Haiti, Afghanistan, and Congo.

¶4. (C/NF) Although Spanish troop deployments are small compared to the US, its troops work effectively with their NATO counterparts. Chief of Defense General Sanz is pushing transformation, working, as he told DASD Fata, to make all Spanish servicemembers deployable. Spain leads in contributing troops to the NATO Response Force, and it deployed those troops to NATO's Pakistan earthquake relief mission. Spain currently runs NATO's air policing mission for the Baltics. The Spanish have been active participants in NATO's Operation Active Endeavor patrolling the Med. A Spanish frigate joined the Theodore Roosevelt battlegroup during its operations a year ago and another Spanish ship recently returned from joint counternarcotics operations with JIATF-South. Spain, especially the Navy, continues to favor US defense equipment, and has chosen US combat systems for its F-100 frigates and S-80A submarines. Spain's defense budget for 2007 will be about nine percent higher than this year's budget.

¶5. (C/NF) At the Riga Summit, Spain will firmly support some initiatives and require more talking on others. The GOS is

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committed to the success of the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan. Spain has committed 150 million euros over five years for Afghan reconstruction. The GOS strongly supports the work of its Provincial Reconstruction Team in Qal-i-naw, as well as the Quick Reaction Force troops that it maintains at the Spanish/Italian Forward Support Base in Herat. Over the summer, Spain increased troop strength by more than a third, and sent heavier vehicles. While public opinion of the Afghanistan mission is low, the GOS continues to work to build public support for the mission, even bringing the Afghan Defense and Foreign Ministers to headline a conference. Spain has removed all but one of its caveats/operational restrictions.

¶6. (C/NF) Thanks in part to its experience with the Pakistan mission, Spain is a strong advocate for NATO common funding. On Global Partnership, Spain has indicated it can accept flexible partnerships but wants more discussion on partnership criteria and does not want to create new structures that could detract from the Mediterranean Dialogue and other existing partnerships. Spain values the Med Dialogue as a unique regional forum where Arabs and Israel sit down together. Spain supports a phased approach to Middle East training, wanting to carefully measure interest before pouring concrete. On strategic airlift, Spain has chosen to stick with its national solution, but continues to attend the consortium's planning sessions.

¶7. (C/NF) In assessing the state of the US-Spain defense relationship, it is useful to consider the sight of the US flag in Spain's National Day parade on October 12. For a couple years, our flag was notably absent from the parade after Zapatero, as opposition leader, did not stand when the American flag passed in 2003, citing his opposition to the war in Iraq. This year, General Sanz, who says publicly that he owes at least one of his stars to his various periods of military training and service in the US, took the initiative to bring it back. He worked with the Embassy - and his bosses Minister Alonso and President Zapatero - to arrange the invitation. This year, the American flag was marched

proudly down Madrid's main boulevard alongside those of other allies deployed in the Balkans, surrounded by the finery of the Spanish military. The King, the President, Minister Alonso, and other high representatives of the GOS paid special respect as it passed by the reviewing stand. Their attention to the US flag and its very presence was the focus of virtually all the Spanish press coverage of the event, which was resounding positive.

¶8. (C/NF) The withdrawal of Spanish troops from Iraq in 2004 poured ice water on the bilateral relationship. We have pushed the Zapatero government to come a long way since then, finding areas where the two governments can work together productively and trying to mitigate its mistake. We can now talk seriously about Spain's contributions to Iraq. While it will not put boots on the ground in Iraq, the GOS is participating in NTM-I by training Iraqi security forces at its demining Center of Excellence near Madrid. It has said that it would consider other requests for training from the Iraqi government. It is fulfilling its donor's conference commitments. And Foreign Minister Moratinos committed to Secretary Rice that Spain would provide additional

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reconstruction assistance in the health and education sectors. Spain has promised \$22 million for the Basrah Children's Hospital, a priority of the First Lady.

¶9. (C/NF) One key disagreement looms over the defense relationship: the NCIS/OSI MOU issue, in which Spain fails to agree with us on the appropriate operating procedures for the work of NCIS and OSI in Spain (the US-Spain bilateral defense treaty mandates such an agreement). Spain insists that for reasons of national sovereignty and public opinion, it cannot appear to allow NCIS and OSI agents free reign without prior approval and escort by the Ministry of Defense.

The current disagreement, so far, has not stopped the flow of US ships and planes through the Spanish bases or colored an otherwise improving, productive relationship.

¶10. (C/NF) Embassy Madrid supports and concurs on the importance of resolving the NCIS/OSI issue promptly. We have communicated to the Minister and his key staff that an unresolved NCIS/OSI issue will dominate your meeting with Minister Alonso. I certainly encourage addressing the issue, but we should also use this opportunity to discuss the full

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range of interests described here. I strongly recommend that you take a comprehensive approach to the visit and capitalize on the broad aspects of long-term cooperation.

AGUIRRE